



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
January 22, 2024

REBECCA DARR CELEBRATES 25TH YEAR AS LEADER OF WINGS PROGRAM, INC.

Growing the agency from \$350,000 to over \$13 million, Darr plans to have a celebration once a month throughout the agency's service areas

Chicago, IL, (January 22, 2024) – WINGS Program Inc., the largest provider of domestic violence services in Illinois, is celebrating Rebecca Darr's 25th anniversary as leader of the agency. Once a month, WINGS will hold a party commemorating a program creation or service expansion that has occurred since Rebecca Darr became the agency's leader 25 years ago.

The first party will be held January 25th in Des Plaines in recognition of WINGS first residence established there. February's party will be held on Leap Day February 29th in Chicago in honor of WINGS Metro Safe House opening February 2016, expanding WINGS service area into Chicago.

Darr's passion to end domestic violence combined with her tenacious dedication to aiding survivors has led WINGS to experience significant growth. Under her tenure, WINGS has expanded its annual budget from \$350,000 to over \$12 million and grew assets from \$600,000 to \$26 million.

Rita Canning, WINGS long-time supporter and Board Chair Emeritus, shares, "25 years ago, WINGS was looking for an Executive Director. A friend of mine recommended I meet with Rebecca Darr and halfway through that breakfast I knew she would be perfect for the job. 25 years later, we all know she is. **WINGS is what it is today because of her leadership and vision.**"

The agency has grown from solely offering transitional housing to offering a continuum of domestic violence services, meeting survivors where they are with critically needed services. She has been the leader under several expansions in programming:

- Opening two Safe Houses providing emergency housing for survivors fleeing domestic violence,
- Pioneering an award-winning Survivor Lifeline Mentoring program where survivor mentors assist clients moving from domestic violence shelters into housing,
- Creating and expanding a comprehensive Children and Family Services program which aims to break the cycle of violence,
- Expanding housing options for survivors including transitional, permanent supportive housing and rapid rehousing throughout Chicago and the northwest suburbs,
- Began WINGS Resale operations, which has grown from one to four stores. In addition to providing a revenue stream for programming, WINGS Resale also provides opportunities for clients to shop for needed items and furniture.
- Cultivating partnerships with local hospitals to offer onsite counseling and safety planning to patients who disclose they feel unsafe at home, and

- Recently opened the Foglia Family Resource Center which provides domestic violence counseling and support groups to adult, teen, and child survivors.

A collaborative thought leader in the field of domestic violence, Darr has served in leadership positions for multiple coalitions: Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence, The Network: Advocating Against Domestic Violence, Northwest Suburban Alliance on Domestic Violence and Cook County Commission on Women's Issues.

*"Rebecca's leadership over the last 25 years has driven WINGS to be the amazing organization it is today. The heart and passion that Rebecca has dedicated to WINGS mission has had **a tremendous impact that I am truly in awe of**. The execution of her vision has made a difference in the lives of many, **turning vulnerability into home, strength, and confidence**. It is exciting to witness Rebecca's vision continue to evolve as WINGS continues to grow,"* WINGS Board Chair, Ellaine Sambo-Reyther shares.

Donations are requested in honor of Rebecca Darr's anniversary and can be made on the agency's website: <https://wingsprogram.com/>.

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ABOUT WINGS PROGRAM, INC.

The mission of WINGS Program, Inc. is to provide housing, integrated services, education, and advocacy to end domestic violence. WINGS offers a continuum of services including housing across Metropolitan Chicago: WINGS Metro Safe House in southwest Chicago, Suburban Safe House in the northwest suburbs, Transitional and Permanent Supportive Housing, Rapid Rehousing, Children and Family Services, and Community Based Services including hospital partnerships, Survivor Lifeline mentoring, and A New Direction Counseling Center and the Foglia Family Resource Center. **Anyone experiencing domestic violence can receive help by calling the 24-hour hotline at 847.221.5680.** Survivors interested in learning more about WINGS counseling services may call 847.519.7828.

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WINGS Metro Safe House Ribbon Cutting February 2016, representing the first domestic violence shelter built in the city in over a decade.



Ribbon Cutting ceremony for the Foglia Family Resource Center November 2023. From left to right: Denise Urban, WINGS Executive Vice President and CFO; Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi; Matthew Baumann, WINGS Board of Directors Immediate Past President; Rebecca Darr, WINGS President & CEO; Darla Swango, WINGS Board of Directors; La Tonya Walker, WINGS Chief Program Officer; and Lara Sanoica, Mayor of Rolling Meadows.